

As thousands of service members continue deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, this year—and every year—we honor them with a renewed commitment to keep our promise of support. Without the brave efforts of generations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen and their families, our country would not be the beacon of freedom, hope and stability that it is today.

As a member of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, I have continued to champion the cause of veterans on the Central Coast and across the country. In fact over the last five years, I worked with the Democratic-led Congress to make historic gains for America's troops, veterans and military families.

In keeping with our commitment to support veterans, earlier this year this committee wrote the Fiscal Year 2012 funding bill to include a \$2.1 billion increase from last year's funding levels. As part of the bill, the committee also recommended \$58 billion for Veterans Affairs programs that provide veterans with the support they need to lead healthy and productive lives after their service. This bill easily passed the full House of Representatives.

During the process of putting together the bill, I also used my influence to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs addresses the 10% of veterans who have no access to a federal, state or tribal VA cemetery. The bottom line is that this will help our local efforts of building a much deserved cemetery for our Central Coast veterans.

I am also happy to report that we continue to move closer to building a new joint Army and VA clinic on the Central Coast to serve veterans, active duty service members and their dependents. As we all know, access to water is one of the biggest hurdles to overcome when constructing a new building. That is the issue I am working with these two agencies to resolve, and ensure that the new clinic has access to the water it needs.

Returning veterans are hurting from an unemployment rate that is even higher than the civilian rate. As the Iraq War winds down, and more heroes return stateside, we have an obligation to meet them with the resources they need to transition back into our communities.

For that reason, I urged my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the American Jobs Act, which includes programs that get our veterans into good paying jobs.

Specifically, the bill includes a Return Heroes Tax Credit of up to \$5,600 for veterans who have been unemployed six months or longer, and doubles the Wounded Warriors Tax Credit to \$9,600 for firms that hire veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been unemployed six months or longer. I strongly support programs like this and other programs within the VA that help ease service members back into civilian life.

After serving in the name of freedom for our country, our veterans should not have to fight for benefits at home. This day and every day, we should meet their unwavering service with actions that fulfill our commitment to our troops, their families, and our veterans. For their brave service,

they deserve nothing less.

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